



Admiral Turner's Remarks to PANAX and Sierra Publishing Company, 1600 Hours,
Thursday, 14 September 1978, DCI Conference Room

As Director of Central Intelligence I coordinate all the intelligence activities of our country less the purely tactical ones of the military--soldier in the field with binoculars--I don't have any handle on. I'm also the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency which is one of those components coordinated with the others. In recent months the President has put out a new Executive Order strengthening the authorities of the Director of Central Intelligence to coordinate a very large complex bureaucratic structure of intelligence and the President felt better coordination was needed.

There are two aspects to intelligence: one is collecting information and the other is evaluating it, doing something with it--making estimates so that policymakers can make better decisions based on it. They are quite different functions. Clearly collection is very secretive; the evaluation, the estimation is not necessarily as secretive. Some information must be kept secret either because you reveal how you got it and you don't get it again and you know that better than I--that's your business. Or because it's unique information of value to our decision-makers to have it exclusively.

The President's Order strengthened my authorities primarily over the collection of information because collection is expensive, collection is risky. Take on the one hand expensive technical systems, either photographic or what we call signals collectors, intercepting signals that are going through the air. Or human intelligence - spies--they're not as costly as

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expensive technical systems but they are costly in a risk sense. (inaudible) So my job is to try to make sure that all of these collecting elements are done in a coordinated fashion--we don't have too much, we don't have too little; that the way we operate them doesn't leave gaps in between so that we fail to collect anything about this over here because each fellow thinks the other one is doing it or that we overlap too much and we spend money we shouldn't or that we take risks that we shouldn't.

On the analytic side, interpretive side, it's not as costly and not very risky and we want competition, we want overlap. So, we have a Central Intelligence Agency that analyzes political, military and economic intelligence, we have the Defense Department that analyzes military and some political intelligence and the State Department that specializes in political and second in economics. This is oversimplification but we want that kind of competition because nobody's interpretation of intelligence facts is 100% certain. Very few pieces of intelligence are absolutely conclusive. We have to interpret them and its very easy to get caught up in your same old assumptions and not see that something new is happening so what we're looking for is a diversity of opinions here.

We are doing both of these activities today in a rather new environment in this country. Intelligence has always been almost totally secretive for some of the reasons I've mentioned briefly and the American public accepted that on faith because it was necessary; because it was being done well. From '75 to not too long ago, I think, we had a great deal of criticism of the way we had done intelligence. And in some instances there was evidence that we had abused the privilege of secrecy, trust that we had been given to

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do things without oversight or public exposure. There were more accusations than there were facts, but there wasn't a fact that (inaudible) warrant interest by the public in whether we are doing things correctly today. Having lost that same sense of trust and faith to some extent we are, I believe, in many ways forced into being a little more open and to a greater degree of oversight by appropriate authorities. We're adjusting to this--it's a very radical change--it's a new model of intelligence different than the world has known anywhere before, in my opinion. But there actually are strengths for us in this. We're more open primarily on the side of analogies and interpretations as I mentioned to you. When we make a study we look at it when we're finished and say if we took out what we have to take out because it reveals our sources or because it takes away an exclusive piece of information that is valuable to our decisionmakers, would there be enough left to be of value to the American public if we published it and if it would, we do publish it. We have published quite a bit in the last year--you've perhaps seen or heard of our energy studies, our studies on international terrorism. We don't publish everything that we could declassify because some of it is not of great value or interest but we try to see if we can help enlighten the American public debate on topics of interest and concern and we hope that we can be of value there. In turn I think it's of value to us, engenders for us the kind of support that any public institution must have to survive, and if you don't have that support on faith, on trust you have to generate it to some extent.

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We also will benefit in other ways. When we put out the⁴ first energy study there was a lot of criticism of it. I won't go into all the details; we ended up getting the main critics right here around this table-- as a result of that publication. Now I'll tell you that really happened--you know that as well as I. Anybody in your business realizes the value of criticism and critique of your work, your interpretive thoughts. It has led to some very good continuing interchanges with the American community that deals in interpretation of energy problems.

At the same time we really do have a problem in this country with all of you in leaks, in secrets getting out. Let me assure you that where I view the game it's your job to get all the information you can, it's your effort and your responsibility to decide whether you publish it or not. But it's also my job to prevent you getting the things that you're not supposed to get and I'm working hard at that; that's part of our American society. And I'm taking a lot of steps around here to cut you off.

Mainly we're trying to make people more security conscious--there's no way you can legislate, pass laws or rules or procedures that will really close all the gaps--either against espionage or against just plain leaks for various motives be it money or wanting to be a big shot. But the government has expanded so much the amount of classified information brought in, particularly by the technical collection systems I'm telling you about, is so much greater today than 20 years ago. There is so much larger a corpus of classified information that the problem of control is greater and we have drawn careless in the process as a government, not as the Central Intelligence Agency--but with everybody else is less secure today than ten years ago.

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But as a government we're more likely to be careless in the way we handle information going around amongst us and the xerox really hurts-- great invention for our purposes and efficiency but it sure hurts security.

So we're doing what we can to close that gap and its important to do so. Let me only say to you that I think there's also a dangerous stream of thinking in our country in this regard since Ellsberg. There's a little bit too much of a tendency to look on the so-called whistleblower as a hero and I'm all for Bernstein and Woodward and I like them and I think they did a tremendous service for our country but if everybody begins to think that tearing down is more important than being constructive and reinforcing and building up, our country can be in problems and I don't think we should automatically look on the whistleblower as a hero and the civil servant as a suspect. The great majority of us are all trying to do our jobs the very best and the most honest and honorable way we possibly can.

At the same time your job is to help oversee us--by inquiring, by investigating, reporting on us. That's good within the limits of secrecy and where you cannot go or should not go if we're doing our job right has to be filled by something else because there needs to be some degree of oversight and now its filled by what I call surrogate public oversight created out of the wake of the Church/Rockefeller/Pike investigations-- surrogate mechanisms. One, the President and the Vice President really take a strong and continuing interest in intelligence today. I'm privileged to meet with the President weekly and to tell him what we're doing and get his guidance, direction. Second is something called the Intelligence Oversight Board; three distinguished American citizens appointed by the

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President, reporting only to the President and available to receive reports from anybody but particularly from members of the Intelligence Community, not through me, but around me to them saying Turner's running that thing illegally or improperly or whatever. They'll investigate it and report only to the President what they feel should be done about the situation.

Thirdly we have a committee in each House of the Congress. I spent 2 1/2 hours with one of them this morning reporting in some of our activities and go up and make the same subject report tomorrow to the other one. They are often very helpful to us as well as conducting oversight--they keep us in touch with the public, they give us a detached appraisal of what we're doing--we get caught up in our own same assumptions, you know, and we get carried away with enthusiasm sometimes when we're doing something we think is very important to the country. But sometimes that induces you to take risks that maybe really aren't worth taking and you stand back and look at them.

So I'm really very keen on the value of these oversight committees to us. Their procedures with us are being regularized and chartered--coming up for debate and vote in the Congress probably in the next session. I think there is a lot of value to us in having those charters. They will regularize, legalize, give us a firm foundation as to what we are required to do; they will at the same time establish constraints within which we are allowed to operate and regularize the Congressional part of this oversight mechanism.

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So back to the whistleblowers for a second, I would respect whistleblowers more if they went through one of these oversight surrogate mechanisms first and then if that didn't succeed they went public. None of them have done that which gives me some question of their full motivation.

Let me just wrap up here. I'd rather take your questions and comments than I would talk by myself here. On balance I think the oversight mechanisms, the procedures of openness that I've described are net plusses for the Intelligence Community and will make us stronger. There is no question there are risks because there will be more leaks the more people knowing these secrets the more likely to leak. There is the risk of overmanagement. These oversight mechanisms start telling us how to do our job rather on checking on whether we did it properly, then we've got too many cooks stirring the soup. I think it will sort out--I'm not telling you it has been sorted out--I'm telling you it's moving in the right direction. Charters are enacted when the procedures are established with the surrogate mechanisms of oversight. I can tell you that so we are going in the right direction today; it will take a couple of years before it really settles down and we're (inaudible)....

It's a historic time in American intelligence. We are deriving a new model--one that reflects the values of our country and yet at the same time I'm confident it will permit us to maintain the capability that we need and which, in my view, is more important today when we are in an

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era of economic interdependence; political interdependence; political interchange with many, many countries of the world rather than the political dominance we one had; the military parity in many areas rather complete military superiority. Under those circumstances the leverage of knowing what's going on in other parts of the world and not just the Soviet Union but all around the world is even greater than it was when we were a much more dominant factor on the economic/political/military scenes of the world. I think we're the best intelligence activity in the world today and we're doing everything we can to increase our lead rather than in any way diminish it.